8
May
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PSYCHO STYRENE

The Journal of SCI-FI, Fantasy, & Horror Modelling

Grav Tank Project

Dynamation A How To Guide

Custom Figures A New Take on Modelling

Space Dock II

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Data Burst

By Geek Bot

Hi Guys and welcome to Issue 8 due to a few technical difficulties this month the magazine is late sorry for that, but next month we are going with a slightly revamped magazine, with all the same great stuff in here just a bit more of a whizzy bang look☺ and some very cool articles and interviews

If there is anything you would like to see in here drop me a line here at Readers Comments or here on the forum

Enjoy the mag and we will be back to our regular transmission in 60 days☺

Front Cover By Dwayne Pinkney & Darren Llewellyn
Rear Cover By Jay Barnes

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Dynamation for the Happy Amateur

By Richard Svensson

I am a stop-motion animator. It's not my profession but it is my passion. I saw "King Kong" when I was six years old and my life was changed forever. The very next day I built my first-ever diorama, featuring Kong's Skull Island, with Kong and the other prehistoric denizens sculpted in clay. "Kong" was followed by other films and TV shows with stop-motion effects, such as "Star Wars" and "Jason of Star Command". But the films that more than anything caught my imagination were the ones featuring effects, animation and –lets just call it absolute creative input, by Ray Harryhausen. I'm talking about films like "The 7th Voyage of Sinbad", "Jason and the Argonauts" and "Clash of the Titans". Here you were shown incredible vistas of fantasy worlds and scenes with heroes going toe to toe with cyclopes, giant scorpions and bronze giants. I read everything I could find about how the animation and the effects were done and I soon found out about the so-called "Dynamation" type of effects that Harryhausen was creating. Apart from various types of matte and modelwork, Dynamation was mostly about the animated puppets and the often near-seamless integration of them into live-action footage. If you haven't seen the skeleton duel from "The 7th Voyage of Sinbad", you simply haven't seen what real pre-CGI effects could achieve! Being constantly exposed to fantasy films during the first ten years of my life seriously warped my brain and put me on the path of creating my own little epics (which continues to this day).

When I was twelve I had my own film-making group up and running. I made my first films using a Super-8 camera, which allowed me to create my first stop-motion using the single-frame feature. The footage is woefully bad by any standards today, but it does certainly have its charmful air of nostalgia. The combining of actors and animated

monsters was done in the simplest possible way; editing together shots of the monsters and shots of the actors reacting to them. After that I went on to analogue video, which was a completely animation-less period since there was no way of doing decent stop-motion using that kind of camera. But then along came digital video and things started to happen for the ordinary amateur. A film shot on DV is edited on a computer and besides being able to cut your footage with extreme precision, you can also incorporate animation and make it appear to be a part of your live-action footage. Dynamation at last! There are different types of software (so far mainly for PC use) that will allow you to capture still frames on your computer hard drive through your DV camera. The software stores the frames and plays them back in sequence as a film. Additionally, there are more software programs that you can use to mix live-action and animation.

There are two reasons why I use stop-motion in my films. I like to make monster films; I admit it without shame or any need for justification. I like to make them in the same way Ray Harryhausen did them –With creatures as characters in mythological and fantasy settings. And let's face it; a scene with a knight battling it out with a dragon is a pretty good attention-grabber. But how would you actually go about creating such a scene? The way it's usually done today is through computer-generated animation, but you need one hell of a powerhouse computer to pull that off. You also need software that can produce and render intricate skin detail. So first of all you need a really, REALLY big wad of dough. I'm an amateur filmmaker. I don't have that kind of resources. But I can sculpt and I know how to make a puppet with poseable joints, and I know how to animate it, how to make it move and "act". And the software I need to store the animation on my computer and combine it with my live-action footage –that I *can* afford.

The other reason is that stop-motion is aesthetically pleasing. When you see that creature moving about on the screen you know that human hands built it, animated it and infused it with life. It has the imprint of its creator on it. To me, computer-generated animation is just too anonymous. I often hear that stop-motion is a dying art form, but that is not true.

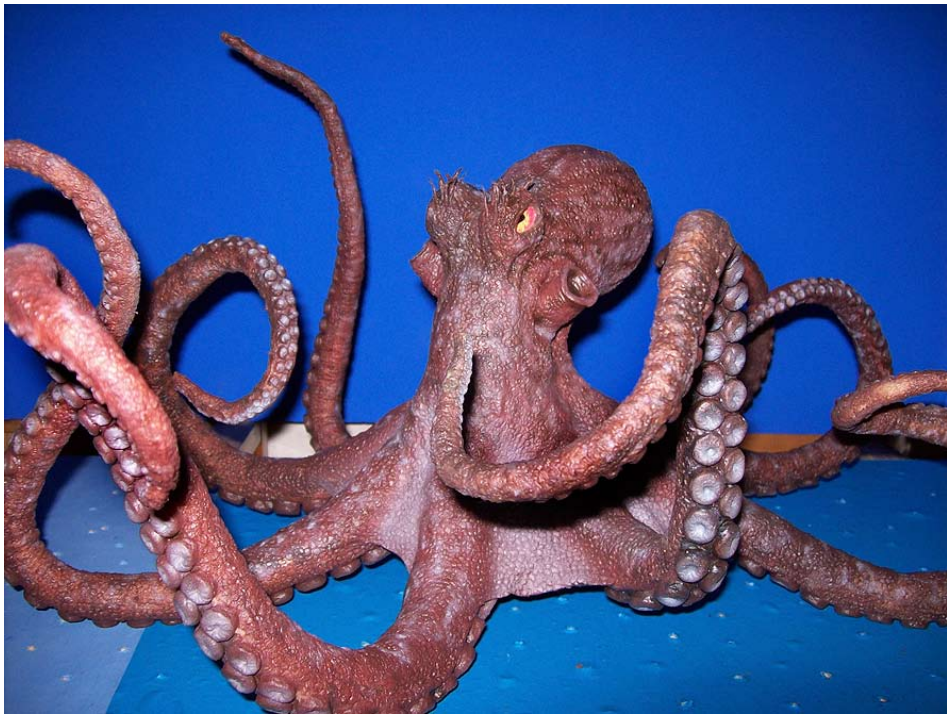
There are a small number of people in the world practicing stop-motion, but it's a constant number. When one of us kicks the bucket, another one jumps on board.

There are really only two hands-on skills you need to acquire before starting out with this hobby/passion; You need to learn how to animate and you need to be able to build puppets that will hold up for the duration of your film. In the last issue I explained how I go about building my puppets. The fact is, that's the part that most people find hard to master, and it does take a bit of practice and experimenting until you've developed the right techniques and found the materials that you're comfortable with.

There's really not much that I can say about the animation part. Just get going and start moving stuff around in front of the camera. You'll figure out what works and what doesn't pretty quickly. Generally speaking, nature is the best school. Observe how different animals move and how you and other people move. Then break those movements up in frames and start moving your puppet. A stopwatch can be very helpful for calculating how many seconds a step might be, for instance. I animate all my puppets to move at 25 frames per second. This will give the puppet smooth enough moves, but sometimes it's OK to do less than that. When you come down to 15 frames or less the puppet will start to move "jerkily". For an all-puppet film that can still be acceptable and it may also work for mechanical and robotic characters. However, I prefer to keep the movements as smooth as I can make them.

A great help in calculating how much to move your puppet between frames is some sort of visible measuring tool. Old-school animators use a "surface gauge" –basically a jointed metallic pointer that is put next to the puppet before you move it. As an example you move the tip of the pointer out from your puppet's arm one centimetre. Then you move the puppet's arm until it touches the pointer. Now you know you've moved your puppet's arm as close to a centimetre as it's possible. Doing this just by eye would be extremely difficult for most people. Then you remove the surface gauge and you photograph a

frame. Then you start over again, putting the pointer up against the puppet arm, moving the arm, saving the frame and so on. Using a surface gauge will allow you to move your puppet at almost exact intervals. Then it's, of course, up to your skills as an animator and the flexibility of your puppet. Other people prefer to use "onion skinning", a feature in some software that allows you to overlap two frames, the one you just saved and the one you're about to save. Thereby you can see on the computer screen how far you've moved your puppet. But it can be treacherous to rely just on onion skinning, as you only perceive the puppet from one two-dimensional angle. A surface gauge will more accurately show the increments of your animation.



In order to get started animating you need some frame-grabbing software. The most popular one seems to be the PC-based StopMotionPro, developed especially for stop-motion animators. That's the one I use and last I heard Aardman Animations (of "Wallace & Gromit" fame) were using it too. StopMotionPro has several useful features, including onion skinning and rotoscoping, which allows you to match the movements of your puppet to a live-action video clip. For Mac users there is FrameThief, which offers features similar to the ones in StopMotionPro. But there have appeared a bunch of other frame-grabbing software on the market since the advent of the two aforementioned ones. All of them can be purchased on the web and downloaded instantly. Some of them are for PC and some for the Mac. These programs are often compatible with certain brands of USB or Firewire connections, while others accept analogue connections.

The other VERY important thing in animation is your camera. Most frame-grabbing software prefer DV cameras of one sort or another. Which type you use depend entirely on the size o your wallet. I use a high-end DVCAM with sharp, crisp image quality. The pros prefer digital still cameras with very high resolutions. That's certainly not beyond the amateur, but they tend to be very pricey and you may have to upgrade your video capture card in order to get the camera talking to your frame-grabbing software.

If you plan to shoot puppet animation

which is to be integrated into live-action shots you'll also need a chroma key stage. Chroma key is better known as bluescreen / greenscreen compositing. In short, you film an object against a screen of a strong color (often bright blue or bright green) that isolates the object in question. This background color can then be removed with the appropriate software and replaced with another background, such as new footage. The more even the blue or green color is and the better you can light your screen, the better the results will be. Lighting and shooting with Blue/green screen can be a science in itself and you'll find it will take some practice to get your set-up as good as you want it to be. My bluescreen is a smooth fiber board, 40 X 40 inches, painted with special chroma key paint. I use several small 40 watt light bulbs to light it. Another two-three small light are used to light the puppet. It's a simple setup that works remarkably well. The only big cost here was the chroma key paint, which was a bit pricey, but worth every penny.

The final big trick is done with the right editing software. When you start off with digital editing the learning curve can be a bit steep there too. Of course, as the case is with the puppet building that can be entirely individual. I was at first intimidated by the look of the work spaces in some of these programs, but I soon realized there were similarities between them and I got into the habit of finding the right menus and commands quickly enough. When it comes to learning the features in any editing software I've found that nothing beats YouTube. I hardly ever go to the actual manual for info, since I've hardly ever found what I was looking for there. But YouTube is jam packed with tutorials about all sorts of software with tips and tricks about anything from image grading to rendering.

When working with chroma key effects I prefer After Effects to all other software. The most popular plug-in for chroma key compositing seems to be KeyLight. It's very good and not particularly complicated to use once you know what the menus are for (if not, just stop by YouTube). I mostly use Primatte Keyer together with the Puffin Composite Wizard. In my travels I haven't found any other plug-in that'll produce better chroma key shots. Other than those there are, of course, other brands of compositing software, with the Mac and Linux-based Shake at the very upper end of the scale (being used in films like "Lord of the Rings" and the Harry Potter movies). Another highly recommended compositing software for amateurs is CompositLab, sold by fxhome.com.

Working with home-based effects, and just doing them for the fun of it, you'll have to decide on what level you should be working at. If you have enough money you can get the best soft- and hardware there is, but that won't really matter if you haven't got the skills to build good-looking puppets and animate them well. Above all, a good story idea is the most important thing. Always start with that and it'll be a lot easier to sell the whole film to your audience. Above all, make sure you have fun while doing it!

Some resources:
For editing and compositing tutorials: creativecow.net
About filming stop-motion: "The Art of Stop-Motion Animation" by Ken A. Priebe
My own corners of the cyberspace: http://loneanimator.blogspot.com/
http://www.youtube.com/user/bluworm
http://www.loneanimator.com/

Showcase

The Dark Art of Customizing Figures

By Matt

Where to start: The first thing that I do is pick who I want to make, be it Marvel, DC, movie or cartoon character, this is where I first start with the idea of who I'm going to make, then I go from there, Sometimes though, if I find a particular head or fabric or piece of whatever, I might get inspired to do a character that I think that it will work out for. I know that when I did my spawn custom, I wasn't happy with it until I found the perfect fabric for his cape and then the rest came to me. For this article, I will use DESTRO from GI-Joe. When I started working on DESTRO, I wanted to come up with my own design for him and not really use something that had been done before by others, I had just finished doing snake eyes and had started to work on a few other Joe/cobra characters and wanted to add a couple more to the mix, so in comes DESTRO.

At first I wasn't exactly sure on how I wanted to make him look. Over a short time he went through many changes from having thigh high snake skin leather boots with a black top, to having a trench coat, completely different pants (that I stole from another custom), and finally where he ended up at. I love to take my own design on a character and use it for a custom instead of always doing what is the norm, it seems more fresh that way and

different then what has been done before.

With the body I started oddly enough by picking out his head, I had two heads that I wanted to use, one was angry looking, the other not so much. I couldn't decide, so sometimes I do"paint up" of whatever I need, to get an idea of how something might look, like his head. I threw on some silver paint on both heads and went from there. I asked around and got some suggestions from a few friends (thanks Joe and Russ) and picked the second, less angry head. I then went and added a ball joint to his neck (for more movement) and got it ready to use. Then I had to sand down the neck on the body and Dremel out the neck hole a bit in order to fit the new ball joint. Sounds complicated, but really isn't (check out the web link to my custom forum site for a more hands on approach to the ball joint). Next on him, I used a resin copy of another head that I molded awhile back (a captain America head from the newer marvel signature series figures) and modified it a bit. I got rid of some mask lines around his mouth, eyes, etc. I then had to decide on what to do next, for his hands/feet/any kind of accessories. That is the fun part. I collect stuff from everywhere and have drawers full of stuff for this type of thing. I went through a few pairs of hands and feet until I finally got the look that I was going for, at least for that part of him. I have several types of hands and feet that I can pick and choose from, including g I joe sigma six parts, to famous covers, or the DC9 stuff….it 's all good. So, I had the head on the body, the hands and feet. Well, I wasn't sure about the feet…and then I saw the boots that I made for my cobra commander and knew that DESTRO needed them too. So, I "borrowed" them from CC and slapped them on DESTRO. To make the boots, I took an existing pair of feet and boot tops from another figure (green lantern maybe), added some vinyl around them, to give them more wrinkles for a more realistic leather look, painted them shiny black and put them on him. Voila Instant leather boots! Now I just need to figure out how to mold them, so I don't have to keep doing that over and over again. The boots were one of the few things that I kept the same once I decided to use them. I ended up changing out his hands two or three times by the time that I was finished…I even added a trigger finger for his weapon. I finally decided on keeping the same basic look as my cobra commander custom that

I was doing…more elegant of a dress code. And since DESTRO is second in command, it made sense to have him look like his boss. But I wanted to change him just a bit and not be exactly like CC…instead of round buttons I used the square

ones, I also changed a few more things around as well. I gave him a flap for his jacket, some silver buttons, a longer jacket, some trim, etc. Now I had to start to cut out and sew his outfit, which I hate doing, especially by hand. I cut out his jacket, sewed it up. Cut out the pants, ditto to them as well. When I first started to customize, I never used patterns, which was a huge mistake on my part. Let's just say, I've learned my lesson since then and now I always use patterns. I have gotten patterns from many different sources over the last couple of years and usually I modify them a bit to make them my own and easier to use. Like on the shirt pattern, I've gotten rid of the top seam on the sleeves and can even make it so there isn't a seam up the back as well. Little things like that tend to make the costume more seamless and give it an overall neater appearance. You will see by the pictures, all of the different designs that I went through to finally get to the end product which you will see now. His jacket actually started out as a black turtleneck, I ended up adding the "Skirt" and the "flap" to it and then embellished it with the buttons/trim and additional accessories and embellishments. I wanted to keep the basic color scheme of all of the other DESTROS out there (the black/grey/red). I gave him some gauntlets, a tribute to the old figure, which had come off another figure at one point, painted them silver, and set them aside for the time being. I then gave him grey pants (had to do them twice, the first pair didn't turn out right), some nice shiny leather looking boots, some red trim, and silver buttons. But he still needed

something - a turtleneck, so I gave him (at last) his grey turtleneck sticking up through his jacket top. In between all of t his, I went through a few more ideas, one was to give him a cape, and a sword and different boots…but luckily none of that happened. I found the perfect thing to use for his belt (an old dog collar), so I cut it down, added a buckle, some pouches, and some gadgets and painted it all up to match the rest of the red. With as much as I changed around on him, he turned out a lot different than when I first started. I would like to tell you that creating a custom action figure was easy or that there was some amazing secret formula for making the perfect figure, but in truth creating the perfect custom all hinges on style, personal preferences and your imagination. The beginning of your next, or first, master piece could be inspired by a bit of fabric, a pair of boots you love, or an awesome head mold you can't wait to use. The possibilities are infinite as is the end result. We each have our own styles, we each have our imagination and that is what makes each and every one of us Artists. I hope that in the course of reading this article you perhaps found a bit of helpful information, and maybe I opened up a few new doors to possibilities for you. I would like to encourage you, if you have not yet tried, to attempt to make a custom action figure. Remember that it is a learning process and don't weigh yourself against veteran customizers. I would also like to give my thanks to my friends and fellow customizers for their knowledge suggestions and good ol' know how. I'd also like to thank my wife for re-rooting all the hair for me and painting all the tiny faces for me, and finally I'd like to thank Darren for allowing us the opportunity to write this article and hopefully encourage fellow customizers.

http://thecustomcouch2.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=hideaway&action=display&thread=1019

Reviews

A Schreck of a good Model

By Dwayne Pinkney

I've been modelling for about 15 years now, and collect primarily figure kits in styrene resin and vinyl. I have done numerous build-ups over the years which I've sold, but recently decided to start building up my own collection.

My skin technique is an unusual one and takes an old masters portrait approach of establishing values first, then laying down colour. My purpose in developing this technique was to recreate the complex skin tones seen on larger busts and models on a small scale.

I basecoat/prime with Testors camouflage grey, and then lightly mist with Testors white and panzer grey to break up the pattern. I tend to spray from above with the white, and from below with the grey

to highlight the natural shadows of the face. When these have completely dried, I create a wash using Delta Ceramcoat white and my base color, which for Nosferatu was raw umber. The white gives the wash a milky color which softens the spattering effect of the spray paint.
I apply the wash evenly over the entire surface, returning several times to darken the recesses. Once this has dried, I use a detail brush and my base color to further deepen the shadows.

I then begin to subtly shade using a combination of charcoal and powdered pigments, applied with a small round brush. Testor's dullcoat is used to seal everything, and then gloss is applied where necessary. The final step is to gently mist with Floor Shine or a similar brand of spray floor wax. This really pushes the paint back and creates the illusion

of translucency over the entire skin area, and the waxy sheen perfectly replicates the look of a wax figure in a museum. The effect is really startling.

For Nosferatu's jacket, I did some research on Victorian clothing colors before settling on green... I didn't want to use red or burgundy which I felt had been done on a lot of Nosferatu kits over the years. I am a real fan of using Testors model master sprays, and the coat was done using flat black, dark green,

and medium green. I inserted a metal rod through one of the open leg holes to hold the body without touching it and primed with flat black. I then misted it with dark green and then medium green. A trick I've found when doing heavy fabrics like this coat is that if you spray from a distance the paint particles thicken and semi-dry in the air before they hit the model. This causes the particles to collide and pile up on top of each other, giving a very subtle texture,

like wool. The cuffs and seams on the jacket were painted with Delta Ceramcoat black green, with the shading done with charcoal. One last light misting of Testors medium green blended it all together, and I sealed everything with Testors dullcoat.

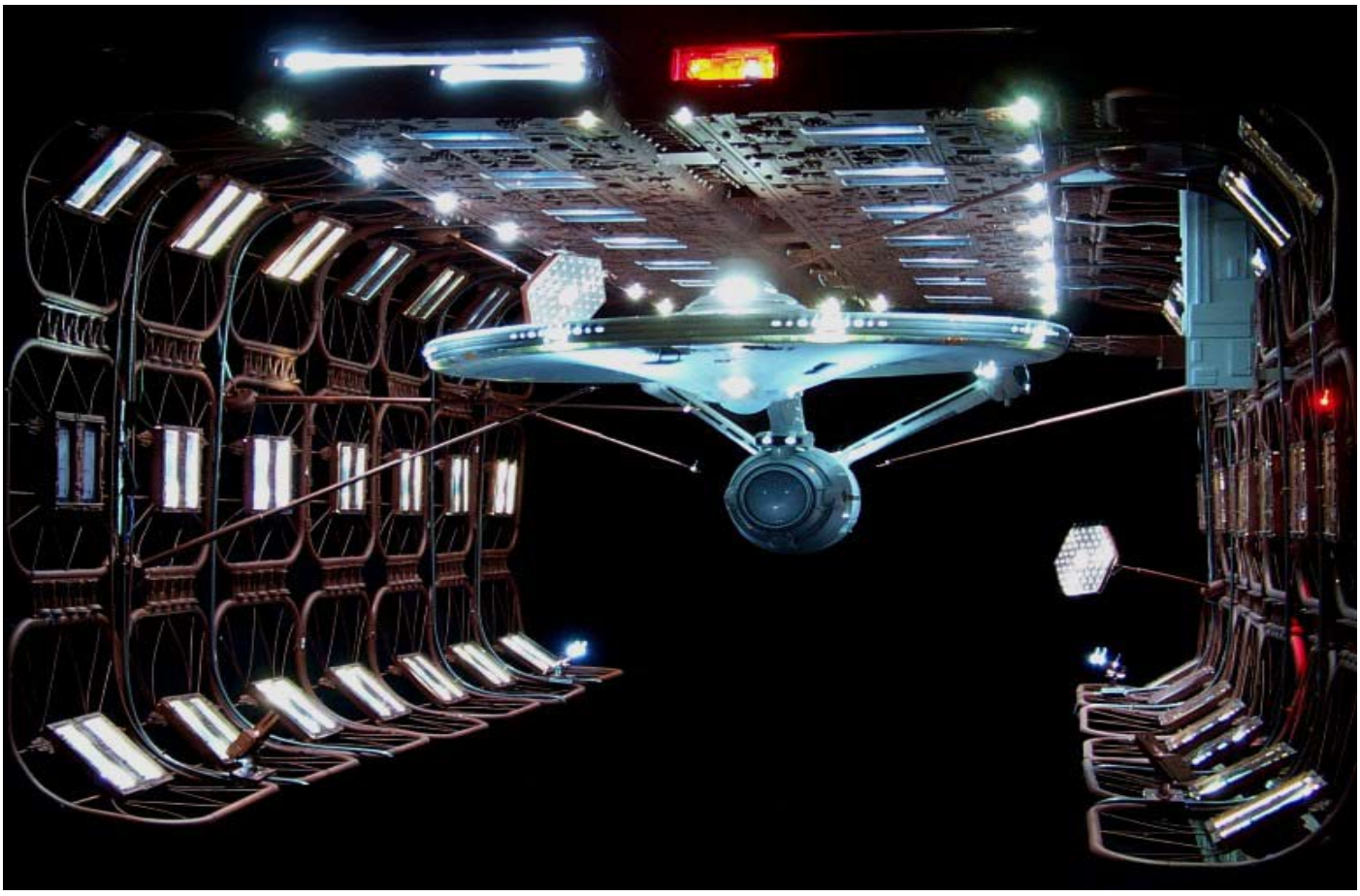
For the rest of the kit, I looked at photographs of actual European castle interiors and exteriors. The base was done using basically the same technique as the skin. A spattering of black, panzer grey, and light sea gray, keeping the tone dark. Once dry, I drybrushed some wear on the stones, and then tinted each stone a slightly different color using washes. I also added different amounts of Delta Ceramcoat glosscoat to some of the washes, giving each stone a slightly different level of sheen. Lastly, I looked at pictures of real centipedes and spiders until I found some I really liked and copied those color schemes.

In all, a really fun kit to build and paint. Dumping out a box of plastic parts and getting out the Testors cement really takes me back to the days when I did this as a kid. That's really what this hobby is about, getting back a piece of your childhood. Thanks to Psycho Styrene for letting me share some of my work with your readers.
Keep modeling!

Nosferatu

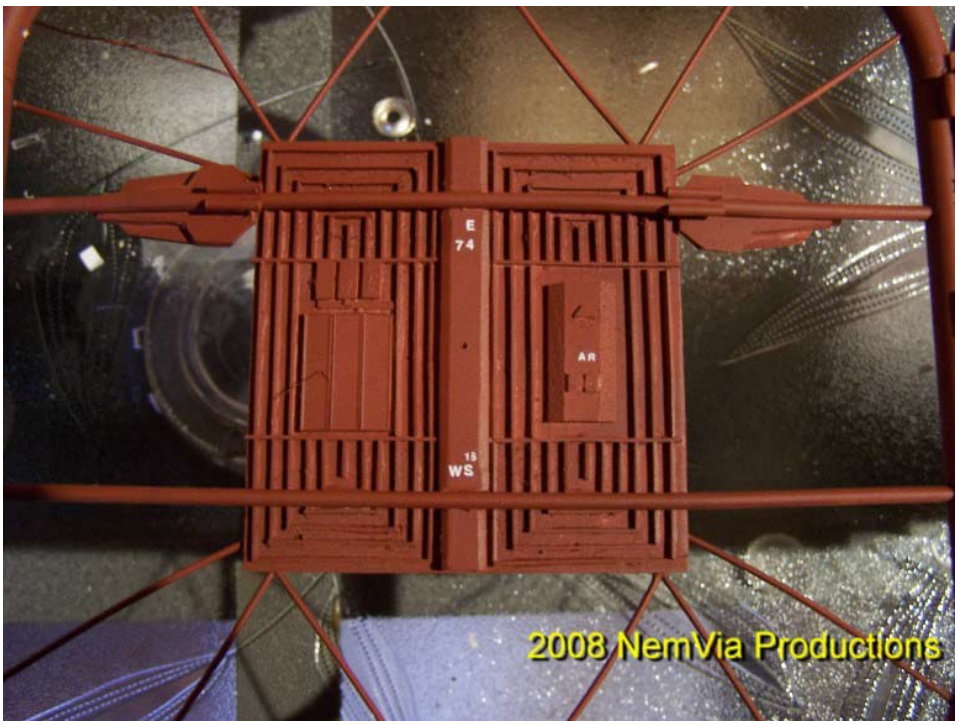
Star Trek: The Motion Picture Dry-Dock Part 2

By Mark Nehmzow



When I finished the detailing, I fitted the modules onto the copper frame I had built and made sure that the PLE would fit under the modules at the proper distance. I also wanted to make sure that the frame could support the weight properly. When I felt I had detailed the modules enough, I had to begin deciding how I was going to build the frames for the light panels that would drape down each side of the dock. In TMP there is only one completely good view of one of the side panels. It is the only one that shows the complete details of the outside of the panels along with the lettering and numbering. You can make out of few of the other letters and numbers on a few other panels but only one can you see completely This panel I used as a reference for all 42 panels that needed to be built. So for this part of the project I built 42 boxes out of styrene then I measured out all of the materials that I would need for the detailing and cut enough pieces according to size to do all 42 panels. There were around 60 pieces per panel. So about 2400 pieces for all of the panels together. It took about 3 weeks to finish all of them. Then I had to make the frames for the fronts of each of the panels and make sure that when they were finished that they fit properly into each panel and that there was enough room to add 2 LEDs each for the lighting effects. All of the fronts and backs of each of these panels were numbered so they can be easily reassembled when it was time. I then had to drill 2 holes in the backs of each of the panels and add 2 tubes that would carry the wiring for the LEDs. These were cemented into place. When all of this was finished I now had to figure out how in the world I would make 42 panel “FRAMES” that would be completely identical and be bent perfectly at each of the 4 corners fitting together perfectly as a

complete unit. I ad bought some styrene tubing and began trying different ways to bend these tubes to the exact lengths and do so while making sure they were perfectly identical. I was having a lot of trouble figuring this one out. Every one I tried would not bend properly or it would look very bad when I did complete it. I though, there has to be a better way. I also thought that I would have to stop working on this model completely until I found a solution. It was very frustrating. I began looking for alternative ways to bend these tubes. I checked back in the forum for the modeller who was building his own panels. He did have tubes with bends in them, but the bends in his version were very sharp. He had clear plastic tubes with a solid colour elbow - type bend. I knew I couldn't use these because I was going to mount my Enterprise through the gangway of the dock and the resulting opening would not allow room for the armature to fit through the panel frames. I was downhearted and felt stumped with this problem. I thought of one idea that might work. I had lots of plastic tubing and felt that if they make the tubing, there has to be some kind of bent pipes that could fit these. Because some modellers build models with actual piping with bends and curves. So I looked on the internet for the size bended pipe that I was looking for. I found on Hobbytown USA's website that they had 2 different pipe elbows. I couldn't tell in the picture that was shown which one was the proper bend. So I ordered a packet of each. I think there were 5 in a package. The first elbows were almost exactly like the one I saw in the modeller forum. But the 2nd one was almost exactly what I needed. The problem I now ran into was these elbows were the same size as the tubing but the plastics where different types and the tubing had a much large inside diameter. I thought.... UUUGH! So I went back on line and found the proper size tubing that would fit these elbow. I measured out what I needed because I already had dumped too much money into this project and made sure that I had the right amount of everything and maybe just a little more. The tubing and elbows were from "Plastrux". When all of the tubing and elbows came I immediately cut the tubing with a pipe-cutter to make all of the ends nice and straight. I cut all of the ones for the straight side panels first and had them all assembled within 2 hours! What a time saver those pieces were and the elbows had the proper bend to them and everything! I was very happy about this short-cut. Now I had another problem. How do I make the upper and lower parts of the side panels with that nice curve in them. I became discouraged again. I tried bending the pieces by hand, but they would not stay bent in the same shape for long and it was going to be very difficult to make them all exactly the same. I needed to do this 56 times exactly alike. I remembered Tom Wibben's technique of heating up the styrene and shaping it around a mould of his choosing. I had a paint stripper gun, but no matter how much I heated the pieces they would not heat up evenly. Then one day my step daughter was visiting and she



had a problem with her back and she needed to use our heating pad for a bit while she visited. I know when I've used it while setting it on high it would get pretty warm. I thought... Why not? It won't melt the plastic, it doesn't get that hot. So I set the heating pad on high, then I put 2 or 3 of the tubes on the pad and folded it over on itself and let those tubes sit in there for about 5 minutes or so to make sure they would be thoroughly heated up through and through. I had a Testors spray can standing by so I could wrap the tube around it as soon as it came out of the heating pad. I took one of the tubes out, immediately wrapped it around the can pushing either end of the tube with my thumbs until the plastic was cool then let go. The tube began to uncurve itself only slightly then stopped. I dipped it in water to completely cool the plastic to keep it from unbending any further and what do you know? The tube didn't get crushed and it didn't straighten out any further. I had found the answer to bending these tubes. Except for some minor tweaking the tubes for the most part were all bent at a near perfect curve. I was thrilled!

Next I needed to drill all of the necessary holes in the tube's sides to allow for each of the panels to be supported by the frames and to allow for wiring. Each of the panel frames were now very east to assemble together. Since the tubes could not be cemented together using model cement I decided to use screws to hold all of the frames together. This gave them a lot of strength when they were assembled. I then began wiring all of the panels together and to test all of the lights as I went along. I had bought some Holiday LED lights that were are on clearance about 80 LEDS for about $8 US. All I had to do was harvest them and rewire them for the model. There are about 120 LEDs used in this model along with 2 transformers one used for the Dry dock and the other for the Enterprise. All of the wiring needed to be run up to the overhead modules and down the sides of the display case to a control panel that I would build later on. I now needed to decide which colour to paint the dock. It appeared as several different shades on the movie screen and because of the lighting it was very difficult to make out the exact colour. I asked for help determining which colour it should be. Some said brown, others liked it white. It was difficult to decide. All of the behind the scenes pictures I've seen appeared, at least to me to be more of a rusty brownish colour. I took a picture of the dock to the hobby store and finally matched it to a RUST colour. I wasn't completely sure it would work but I took it home anyway. I didn't want to mix my own custom colour because I was afraid that if I ran out I would never be able to recreate the same colour again. I wanted something that I could just grab off the shelf whenever I needed it. It was a good thing too, because I wound up needing 7 or 8 jars of it. A good choice on my part. It took me about 3 days to airbrush this model because of all of the details. I

think it took 2 hours to completely spray both sides of the side panels. The moment of truth was when I had to finally assemble all of the pieces together and do some test shots of both models together. To me the colour looked as close as I could get to the filming miniature.

Before I put the side panels on though I had to buy some Dry Transfers for all of the letterings on each of the panels. I followed the motion picture as much as I could and then I made up numbers and letters as I went along using things such as my initials my wife's initials, NBC, CBS, and so forth. I then needed to build a display case to keep the model safe in. I built this out of ply wood and 2 x 4s. I assembled the overhead module in place, then the inside starboard panel frame assembly, then I had to add the PL Enterprise and put it in position before I could add the Port side panel frame. I had to cut a few items on the panel frame to allow the Enterprise armature to fit properly. I then ran all of the Enterprise's wiring up the armature into the overhead modules and then began to cover the wiring and the armature with plastic and added details to make it appear to be part of the dock. For the most part everything was now in place.

All I had to do now was complete all of the wiring and make sure that everything would work the way it was supposed to. It was very complicated to do the wiring, even though I had labelled all of the wires from the ship and the dry-dock. I ran all of the wiring through the modules and down the back of the display stand. I built a control panel with 2 separate sets of controls. One for the Dock with about 12 different functions and one for the Enterprise with about 8 different functions including 2 separate controls that would adjust the engine outputs of the Warp Drive and Impulse Drive. When All of this was wired into place I added the 2 AC adapters underneath the model display to power everything. Then I finally added the tops of the overhead modules. I used 4 pieces of sheet styrene and extra pieces of a spare 1/350 scale Titanic model for many of the details seen on the top. I also added some hinges to these top pieces so I can get to any of the wiring if needed. The model is now fully lit and ready for display. My dream model is now completed. It took me a little over 2 years to build both models and complete them together as an ensemble. I appreciate all of the help and suggestions everyone has given me over that period of time and I'm glad everyone has enjoyed following this build. It was a tough one to do and I am glad it is finished. I hope to someday bring this model to a number of hobby shows so that all can see what this looks like in person. Now, onto other challenges!

Live Long and Build Lots of Models!

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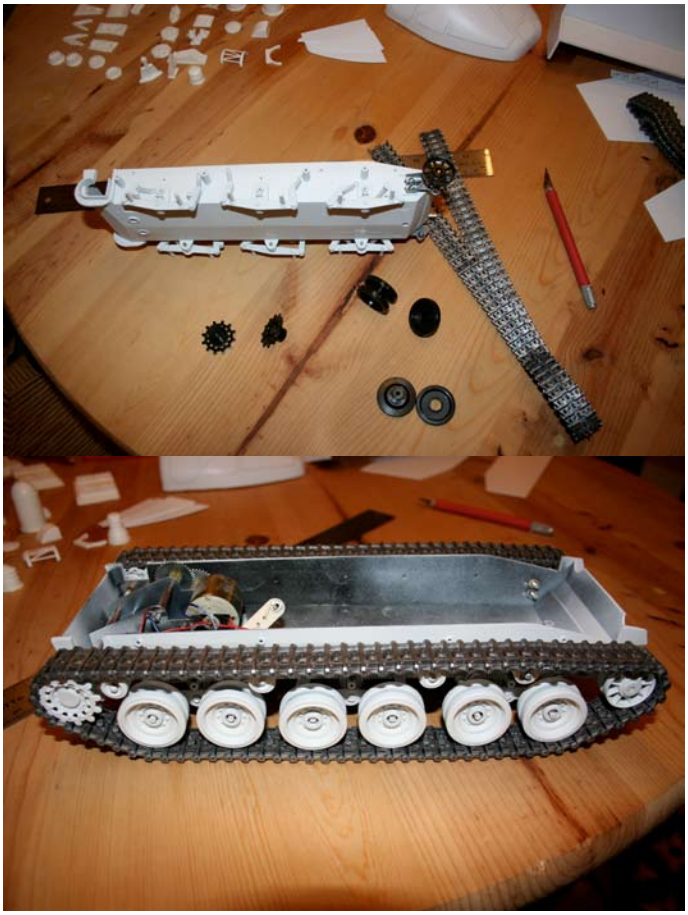
Showcase

Space:1999 Laser Tank

By Jay Barnes

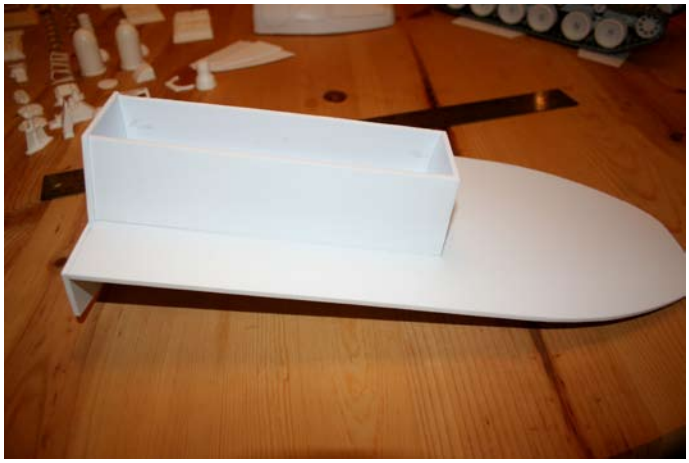
Early in 2008, while looking through the Space: 1999 section of the Resin Illuminati forum I began chatting with a fellow named Robert Hobby. I was admiring the laser tank he had completed, and happened to be sharing pictures of it in the forum. He explained that with some work I could make one of my own, as he had an extra vacuform command module shell I could use. As it turns out he was looking for some model parts I had, and a trade was struck. Rob had researched the necessary parts required to complete an "Eagle Beak" Space: 1999 laser tank and he explained the materials and kits I would need for the build. For the next couple of months I set about acquiring the sheet stock and other bits needed to get the project going. Many of the kits used for detail parts were long since out of production, and Rob provided some resin copies to use that way I didn't have to use all of my original parts.

The original trio of laser tanks, being built in just about one week by the incredible Martin Bower, are marvels of design and amazing to look at. How he was able to come up with such unique designs that flow together so well in such a short time is mind boggling. It was a real privilege to get to build one of his designs using many of the same materials he did on his original tank years earlier, even though it was at a much more leisurely pace. Having never scratch built anything more than a few details on a model all I had done before, but I felt I was up to the challenge. So having made up my mind to commit to the project, I set out in search of the materials I needed. Various thicknesses of sheet styrene, styrene tubing and donor kits would be needed. A box

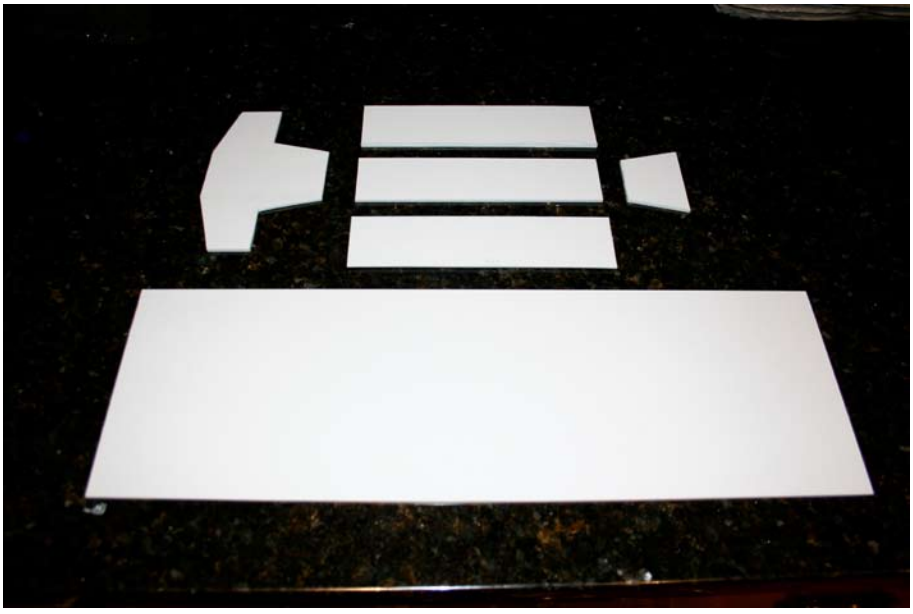


showed up from Rob with the vacuform command module shell he mastered and vacuformed, and some resin parts. Actually there were two shells, one is cut up and used as the raised plating on the outside of the other.

So now I had secured the detail parts, a command module and the necessary sheet styrene and tubing I needed. One very important part was missing; the tank chassis itself. The tanks are all built on 1/25 Tamiya Chieftain Tanks, and those are not only quite difficult to find, but rather pricey as well. It took me the better part of three months to finally find a Tamiya Chieftain, and as I expected it wasn't cheap. There are two other 1/25 Chieftain tank kits out there, made by Toystar and Modelcraft but I preferred using the Tamiya as that was accurate as to what was seen on screen. Last, there were some other parts to acquire, such as the plastic wheel hub



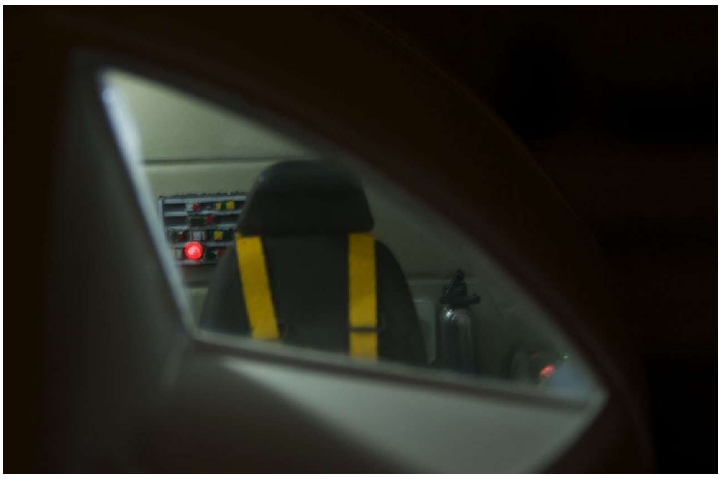
covers, some brass parts for the laser mount, and some clear plastic for the window. Construction started out fairly simply, building just the tank chassis from the donor kit. A few other parts, such as the gun barrel, and search lights will also be used later so those get set aside. I painted the chassis after I completed it as it's a complete assembly. Then I moved on to the main body. I began with cutting the parts for the main platform, rear housing and rear panel from 1/8 thick sheet styrene. They were all glued together using CA. Then I moved on to the command module. Rob had pre-marked all the panel positions on the vacuformed shells using a template he had made up. This made it much easier to cut and place the raised panels on the outside of the second shell. I also cut the window openings and added the vertical and horizontal panels that make up the window opening inserts.



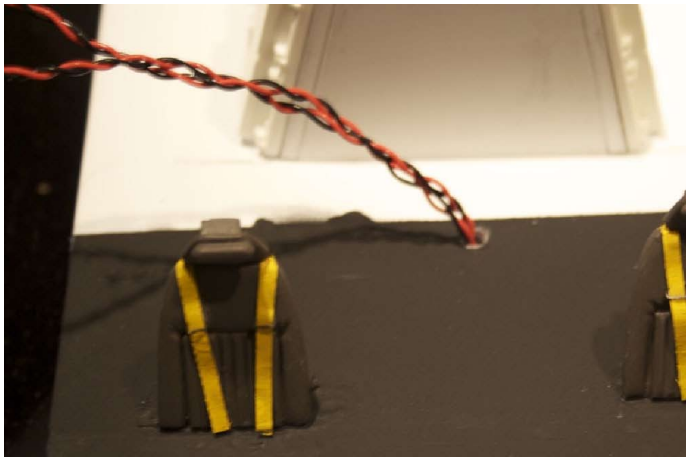
At this point, I decided there needed to be some human scale elements present. An interior would give the model the added scale I wanted nicely! So where to start? I could have made something very basic, like some seats and figures but at the size of this model I went a bit further. Looking at reference images on the web I decided to make a cockpit that was similar to the Eagle, which would give it a familial appearance.
I started by using the rear bulkhead

of the discarded and cut up command module as a rear panel. Then I added a second, more detailed panel on top of that with the door separating the cockpit from the rest of the craft.

A couple of seats were fashioned from 1/8 inch styrene and detailed with smaller pieces of ribbed sheet stock and sprue. A couple of safety belts

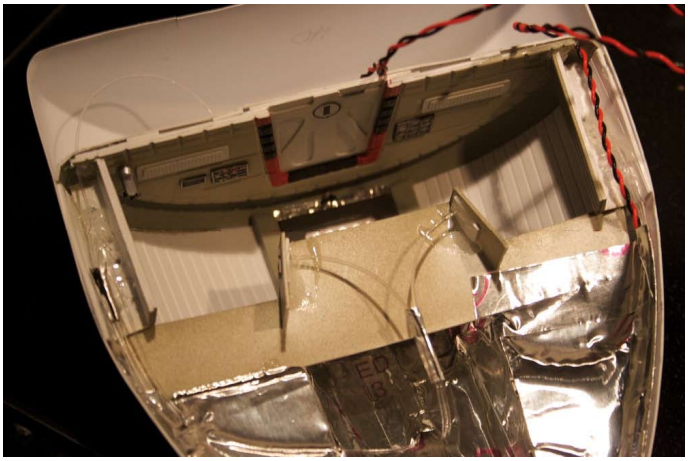


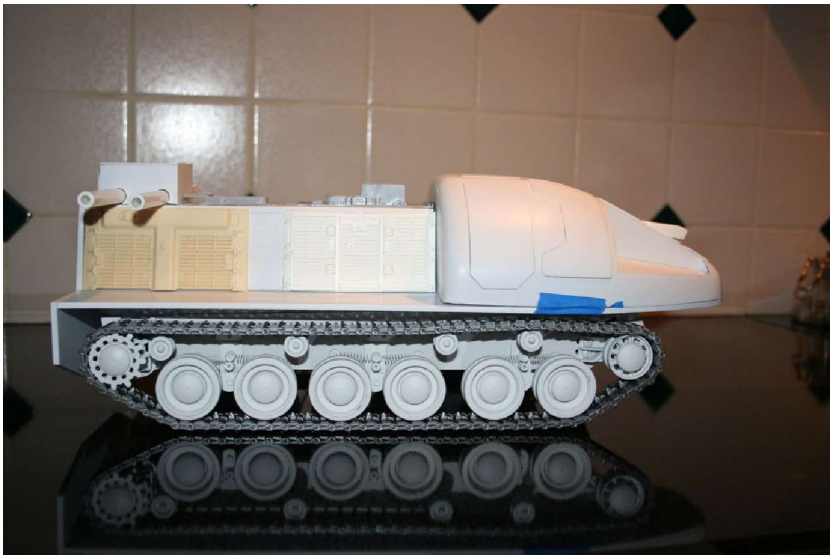
were made from masking tape and the seats were finished in a dark brown/bronze color with yellow safety belts. Some tiny photo etch pieces were added to the belts to simulate the adjusters. The rear wall was painted in a couple of shades of custom mixed warm gray and the cockpit door was painted gloss white. The familiar red/orange and black border around the door was added and then I turned my attention to the instrument panel. Since there would be no way to see the panel from the pilot's perspective, I opted to just build the instrument panel cowl. Some details again were added using various



thicknesses of sheet styrene, and the finished assembly was painted warm gray. A white stripe decal was added to go around the edge of the panel, like the Eagles have. Finally, I glued some v-groove styrene to the outer walls to give them some detail and built an overhead light panel to finish it off. The inside of the command module was covered with metal tape to both block the light from showing through the paint, and to help reflect light back into the interior. Two white LED's were added to provide light from the overhead panel and for some fiber optics I used on several of the interior panels. The LED's are powered by a 9 volt battery mounted in the tank chassis. My goal was to give the tank a look as if it was powered up, in "ready to go" mode.

This was all quite a sidetrack from just building the tank. It took me longer than I originally anticipated, mostly because I had to design and fit





everything from scratch, not to mention I had to be sure it was in scale with the rest of the tank. Once this was all set, it was time to mount the command module to the platform. The command module was attached to the main platform with CA and 5 minute epoxy. The new interior parts wound up giving

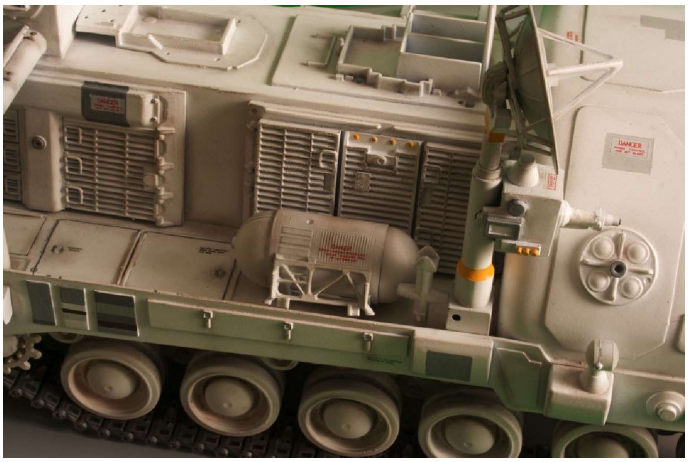
me more surface area to attach the thin vacuform command module to the platform. At this point the command module was sealed shut, except for the window openings but I'll add an access panel a bit later in the process. Next, on to the side skirts. These are made from a long sheet of .020 styrene, with raised detail panels made of .020. This is one of the more difficult parts of the build - the skirts have to have a bit of a twist to them, to cause them to bow out slightly to clear the tank tread. I had to go through this process twice, as I made an error in my measurements and the angle near the rear of the command module did not line up
properly on my first attempt.

Time to build the box and roll bars on for the rear of the tank. The bars are made using 5/16 thick walled styrene tubing. The tubing slides through holes made in the "box" that the laser turret mounts on, then four uprights are notched using a Dremel rotary tool to create the supports. Once the horizontal bars are glued into place, the upright supports are put in place. The box is made from .040 styrene. With this step it's time to start putting on all the resin and styrene kit parts. Starting to take on a familiar shape now! The large detail parts on the upper deck are made from the Airfix 1/600 Bismark and Warspite kits, they are sections cut from the upper decks of both. Care must be taken when cutting these as they were not resin replacements and a mistake would be costly The fun part begins with placing all the resin cast kit parts in their proper places. Careful attention to the original model is required here to get an accurate placement. Some parts will have to wait until after the final overall paint coat is put on for them to be installed

so the paint will cover properly. The radar pole and dish as well as the laser gun itself can be completed at this point as sub-assemblies. Exact placement was determined using side and top views of the tank, scaled up in Photoshop to match the size of known model parts, then printed out. Also the chin of the tank, made from the Chieftain's turret, is cut and

installed with the resin detail parts on the nose. The rear of the turret is radiused to match the curve of the tread, a detail that's not found on the original but I think it looks a bit better. Either way works fine though.

The final raised detail panels made of .020 sheet styrene were cut and added to the skirts and above the command module windows, and also to the rear of the tank. The model was primed, and I began the process off filling any tiny voids and gaps in the construction. The floor access plate was also cut at this time. While I waited a bit to cut the



access, it really can be done at any point in the build. The filling and sanding is where this model really starts to come to life. All the parts begin to blend as one cohesive whole and the result is impressive. I used a very fine, and somewhat dark primer at first. The smoothness and color really showed off any imperfections and allowed me to get the finish just right. In these pictures the radar pole is installed temporarily and so are the large tanks on the tank bed. Those can even be screwed into place from underneath to allow for disassembly later for travel. The laser, made from parts of the tank barrel, and

pieces of 5/16 and 3/16 styrene tubing is detailed with parts from a 1/35 Matilda tank and a part from an old Kaman Husky helicopter. German V2 parts make up the rear of the laser, and a U-shaped mount is fashioned from a strip of brass. A hole is drilled horizontally through the laser and U-mount, and then

a screw placed in for the laser to pivot up and down on. Some more kit detail parts cover the screw head. Another hole is drilled in the bottom of the U-mount so another screw can be placed into a piece of 3/16 tubing, and a 3/16 hole is drilled down through the

mounting point (which is a custom made piece) and down into the structure of the tank. The laser can be

easily installed then by just slipping the tubing into the hole in the laser mount and this allows it to move freely. Finally, a piece of coiled wire or spring in the right diameter is added to the business end of the laser.

The radar pole is made up of 5/16 and 3/16 tubing as well, with a disc of .020 styrene used for the dish and detailed with Saturn V parts. I treated the laser and Radar pole as separate assemblies and finished them completely before installing them. I

began the finishing process at this point. The interior was carefully masked off as there were no windows and I also had the interior access hatch op and after one last careful inspection/last minute clean up I sprayed the model all over with a spray can of Krylon Gloss White. The Radar pole and laser were also painted at this time, with care not to get paint on the mounting shaft of the laser so the paint build up wouldn't cause it to bind. Once dry, I masked the white then sprayed the window slots with Testors Flat Black. Then the various panels and details were painted using reference photos. I used Model Master Ghost Gray, Aircraft Gray and a custom light gray

I mixed. The yellow/orange color I used was made of a mixture of Model Master Yellow and Chevy Engine red. Then I installed the windows, which were made from a clear plastic CD case. They were installed from the inside and the window frames were cut, sanded and painted to match the outside, then glued in using Zap canopy glue. There were a few detail pieces left which were painted separately and they were installed at this time. Parts such as the large tanks on the bed behind the command module, and the detail part on the left side of the command module were left off to paint the base coat around. Now the decals were added, and a coat of clear, matte acrylic was oversprayed on the whole model after masking the windows and the spotlight lenses.The chassis was painted after I assembled it, as it was a completed section and wouldn't require further painting. To give the tank a more realistic appearance, pastel chalks were used to add weathering to the chassis and the tank body.

Finally, it was time to mate the tank body to the chassis. This was done by gluing a piece of pine wood to the bottom of the tank body using five minute epoxy. A hole was countersunk and a wood screw was used to screw through the tank chassis and up into the block of wood on the tank body. This allows access to the battery and the drive motor the Chieftain tank came with. The laser and Radar pole were installed, along with the tanks that go behind the command module and the tank was complete. Time to add a battery and check out the lighting I had the opportunity to attend Wonderfest in Louisville Kentucky this year, and the Laser Tank won Silver and Sponsored Award for Best Sci-Fi Vehicle. Here's some completed shots of the tank.

SUPER
moonrider

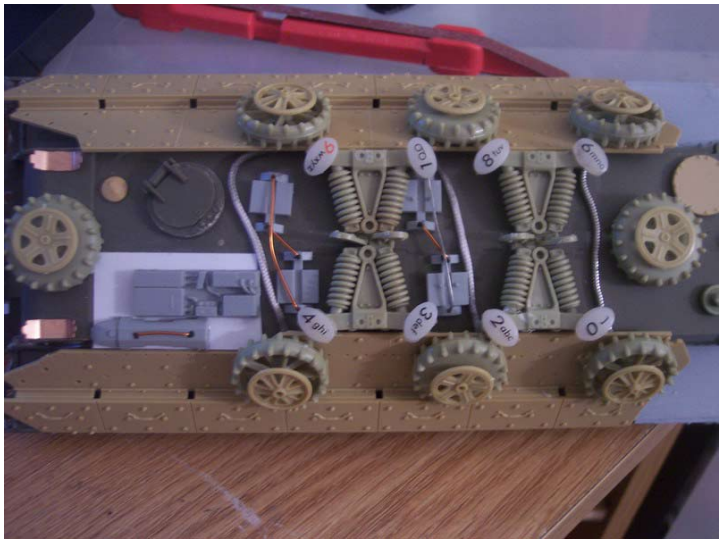
DANGER
ALPHA
MOONBASE

ALPHA
MOONBASE
DANGER

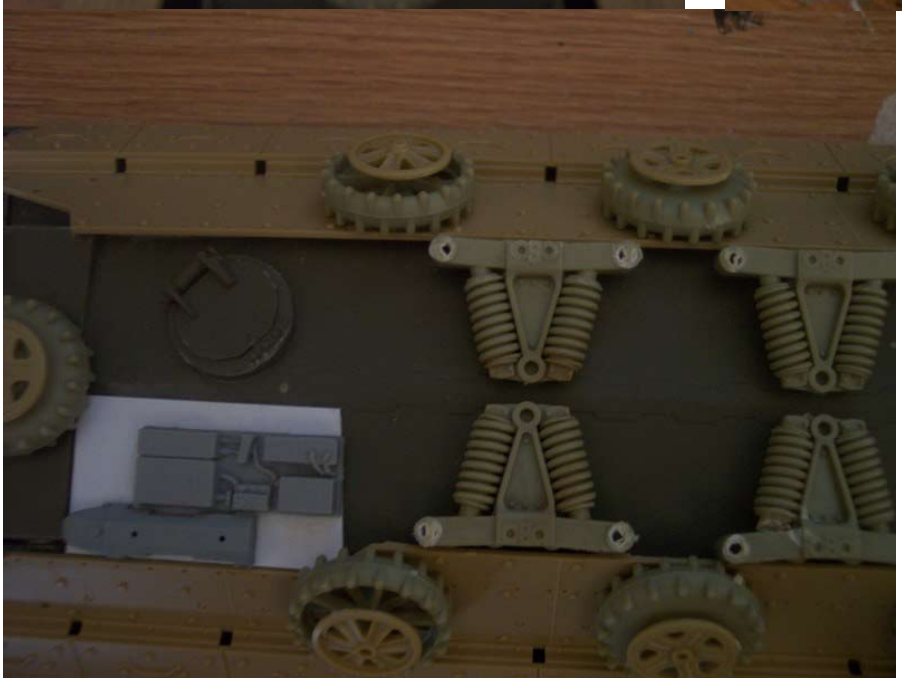
ScratchBuild

Grav-Tank a new innovation in modeling

by Rob koppenhoefer

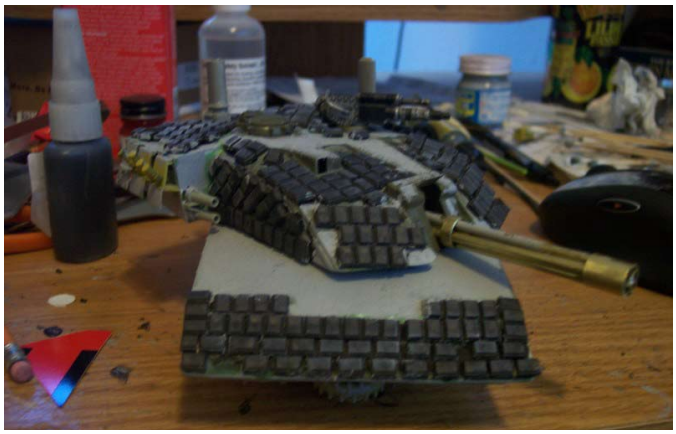


As modelers we all have that box or boxes full of spare parts and kits that we just will never build. I started this build about 18 months ago as a fun project to work on in between and during other projects. Finally I decided to just finish it and give it a place on the shelf. This project stared its life as a Trumpeter Challenger 2 kit that I was never going to build as I had two Tamiya versions. Having always thought that anti-grav tanks where really cool I wanted to build my very own version. Mine would have a Gatling gun in a large caliber instead on of the traditional long gun. That is the

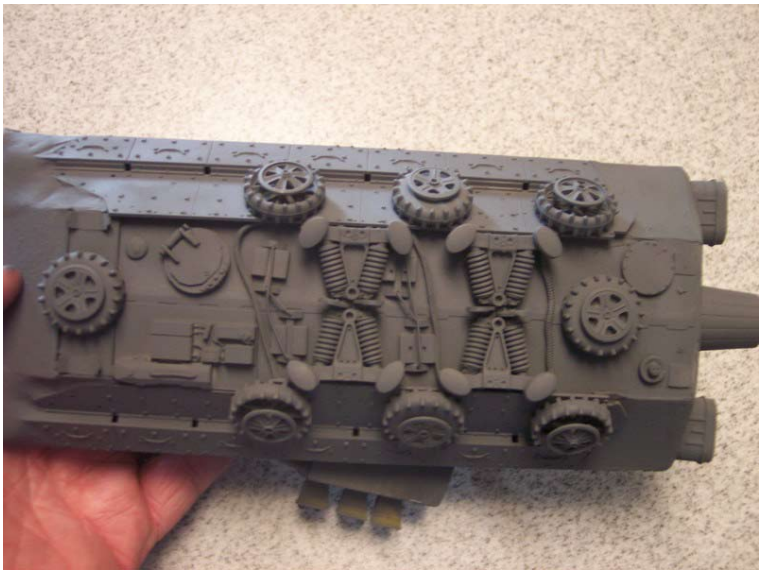


pieces came from numerous and kits and included random bits and pieces from the greeble box. Tamiya M2 Bradley skirts outfit the sides of this beast to give it depth and a great looking front profile. The major pieces of the grav pods are all suspension pieces from a mine roller for a Merkava 1 tank. At about this time I set it aside and did not look at it for a year or so.

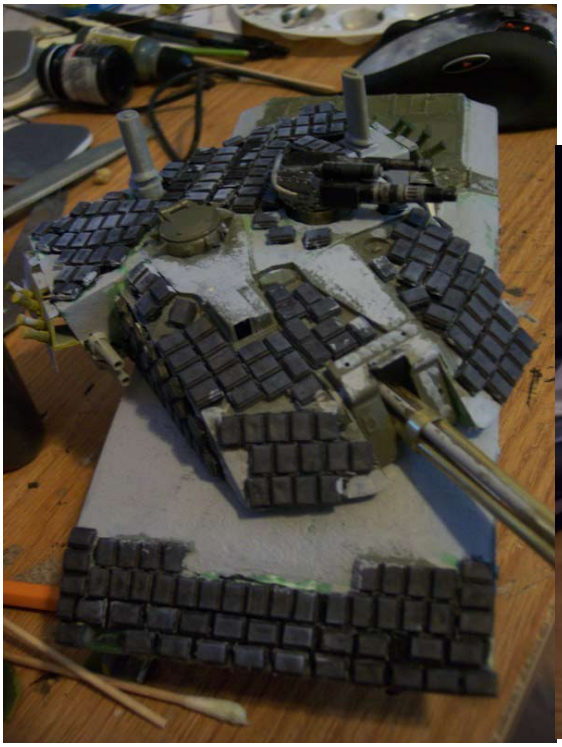
Now how to give this beast a different look from all the other anti-grav tanks you see? I gave mine a set of reactive armor. I took the kits great part of Sci-fi in that you can do what you want without the rivet counter coming out.



After Sanding off all the detail of the kit I began to test fit and glue wing type elements to the sides of the turret. This was easily done but left an uneven surface on top. Using AVES putty I filled the top of the turret then smoothed it out. Next was the work on the bottom of the tank. I decided that I would use a matrix type anti grav unit. The



tracks and cut off the end connectors and center guides and began to place them around the tank. I did not use any real pattern; my intention was to give the model depth when looking at it. I used Aves putty again on the front of the tank to blend the front all together. It really gives it a great composite look. After starting on the armor I also started to place the antennas and weapons. The two antennas on the turret top are smoke stacks for small-scale ships. The smaller gun system is a mixture of plastic, resin and metal pieces. The turret wings got their own set of embellishment by using the armor plates and smoke grenade launchers of a T-80. This way it breaks up the smooth sides of the turret. All areas that did not receive the reactive armor got a nice coat on Mr. Surfacer 500 applied with a sponge to give some good texture.



Now to the painting and the fun. I hit the entire tank with dark gray enamel and let it set for a couple days. I really wanted to have a different camo scheme on this tank so I search the net and looked into some armor books. Finally I just started to cut masks and finally found some shapes I like. The paint used was Model Masters enamel. Colors from bottom coat to topcoat are Sand, Marine Corps green and SAC bomber gray. Spray down the top coat then waited a day between each coat.

Weathering was next and a little fun. I hit the entire model with an oil wash of burnt sienna. Then started to use pastels from Tamiya to add more grime and dirt to the entire tank. The underside got a heavy dose of the weathering. The Base is just a small picture frame that received a new backing. Using local lava rocks (I live in Hawaii) and various oil washes I displayed the tank easily gliding over the rocky ground.

This was a fun build and allowed be to try new techniques and just use my imagination.

Coming in Issue 9

Simon Mercs - of Kitfactory has a great model of the alien saucer from the TV series Invaders

walter pezzali- Has an article on producing his retro robots as kits

The martians Have Landed – Duncan Scott takes us through his war of the worlds Diorama

Lost in Space – Dave Prosser has an article on the Mobieus pod model

Plus lots more stuff and a new look to the mag too

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